UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Memorandum

TO : Mr. DeLoach

DATE: April 3, 1967

FROM : R. E. Wick

SUBJECT: ASSASSINATION OF PRESIDENT JOHN F. KENNEDY
NOVEMBER 22, 1963
DALLAS, TEXAS

James Phelan, the writer for "Saturday Evening Post" who in September of 1965 did the Post cover story "Hoover of the FBI," called my office today and said he had information he wanted to pass along regarding Garrison's investigation in New Orleans. Although we have stayed away from Phelan, it was felt we should hear what he had to say and Leinbaugh in my office talked to him.

POST STORY ON GARRISON:

Phelan said that the editors of the Post decided a couple of weeks ago that he should go down to New Orleans and try to do an in-depth cover story on Garrison's investigation of the assassination. Phelan said he was given this assignment inasmuch as he had done an extensive story on Garrison several years ago, and it was felt Garrison trusted him. Phelan said his story will appear in the Post, which is scheduled to come out April 24. Phelan pointed out that his article will completely discount Garrison's entire investigation.

TRIP TO LAS VEGAS:

Phelan reported that he arrived in New Orleans right during the middle of Garrison's investigation, that he had considerable trouble getting in touch with him, but finally made contact and eventually was able to persuade Garrison to go to Las Vegas with him for two days to rest. Phelan said they got rooms at the Sands and that he had a couple of five-hour sessions with Garrison going over the entire matter. Phelan said he felt quite positive in his own mind that Garrison was leveling with him and that he felt Garrison was being completely candid.

1 - Mr. DeLoach
1 - Mr. Sullivan
1 - Mr. Rosen
1 - Mr. Jones
1 - Mr. Lenihan

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GARRISON'S THEORY OF THE ASSASSINATION:

According to Phelan, Garrison had become obsessed with the assassination and the Warren Report. He apparently has read the report from cover to cover and he told Phelan that he flew to New York once with Senator Long from Louisiana and Long expressed doubts regarding the authenticity of the Warren Report.

Phelan said it was almost impossible to carry on a rational interview with Garrison. He would quiz him about aspects of the New Orleans investigation and Garrison was unable to stay on the subject for more than a minute or two and then would wander off and start "damning" the Warren Report. Phelan said his reaction is that Garrison is no doubt sincere in his belief the assassination was hatched in New Orleans. He said Garrison, however, is completely disorganized, impulsive and obviously knows nothing about running an investigation.

As best as he could tell, Phelan thinks Garrison's thesis boils down to the fact that the masterminds behind the assassination were David Ferrie and Clay Shaw. He described these two men as brilliant homosexuals and feels they planned the assassination for "kicks." Garrison thinks Oswald was the "decoy" and the "fall guy."

STATEMENT OF PERRY RUSSO:

Garrison gave Phelan a copy of the 6 1/2 page statement (attached) which one of his investigators, Andrew J. Sciambra, took from Perry Russo on February 27th. Phelan gave Leinbaugh a copy of this statement with the stipulation that it be "closely held" and that his identity be completely protected. Phelan said that it is most vital that this statement not get out, but he did say if the FBI felt the Attorney General or the President should see it, he had no objections.

It will be noted that the statement of Russo is rambling and disorganized. It is pertinent to note that in this statement, which is dated February 27, 1967, Russo claims that he had only seen Clay Shaw on two occasions--both briefly. Russo also claimed in his statement that Lee Harvey Oswald was the person whom he knew as Ferrie's roommate, and he mentioned the possibility that four people in Ferrie's Civil Air Patrol Unit would be able to name Oswald as Ferrie's roommate. On page 7 of this statement it is interesting to note that Russo suggested that he be hypnotized so he might have total recall on names, places and dates.

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PHELAN'S INTERVIEW OF SCIAMBRA:

Phelan said after obtaining this statement of Russo's, he talked with Garrison's investigator, Andrew J. Sciambra. Phelan described Sciambra as a young oddball, 31 years old who had just received his law degree. Phelan quizzed Sciambra regarding the inconsistencies in Russo's written statement as contrasted to what Russo testified to at Clay Shaw's trial. Sciambra was unable to resolve the inconsistencies and when Phelan asked him about his original notes taken when he interviewed Russo, Sciambra said he had burned them. It was Phelan's opinion that Sciambra was completely untrained and knew nothing about investigative matters.

EXAMINATION OF RUSSO UNDER HYPNOSIS BY DR. FATTER:

Phelan said that he questioned Garrison and Sciambra regarding Dr. Fatter's examination of Russo under hypnosis. Phelan said he elicited information which indicated that Dr. Fatter led Russo along, suggested answers to him, and that the whole session was a complete farce. Phelan said he is convinced in his own mind that Russo gave the story of a secret meeting in Ferrie's room under post-hypnotic suggestion. Phelan added that as far as he was concerned, it was like a hypnotist telling a subject to bark like a dog while under hypnotic trance. He was of the opinion that Fatter was a charlatan through and through.

PHELAN'S CONCLUSIONS:

After spending considerable time with Garrison, Phelan said he had reached the definite conclusion that Garrison's whole investigation was farcical and he characterized Garrison's actions as a "goddamned atrocity." Phelan said he told Garrison before leaving New Orleans that he was going to write his story for the "Saturday Evening Post" and knock down Garrison's contentions. Phelan added that this disturbed Garrison and disappointed him; however, on the whole, he took the matter rather philosophically.

RECOMMENDATION:

It is recommended that this memorandum be furnished the Domestic Intelligence Division for information. If this information, including Russo's statement, is disseminated, Phelan's identity should be protected, and it should be noted that this information was received on a highly confidential basis and should be closely held.